

Who is Joseph Kony?

In recent days, you may have seen the name "Kony" splashed across the Internet. You may have watched a video forwarded to you by a friend, or seen posters around college campuses emblazoned with the name. You might not know that "Kony" is Joseph Kony, one of the world's worst war criminals who, for 26 years, has waged a campaign of terror across several countries within central Africa.

Kony is the twisted and warped megalomaniac behind the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a brutal insurgency that has created a humanitarian crisis that has displaced more than 1.5 million people in one of the world's most difficult ungoverned spaces. Kony and his group have abducted tens of thousands of children. The exact number of children Kony has killed or hurt will never be known.

The effective response to this brutality has been debated for years internationally and at home. To strengthen our efforts, last year, I authored a measure stating it was the policy of the United States to implement a comprehensive strategy to bring Kony and LRA commanders to justice. This measure drew consensus in both the House and Senate. Ending the atrocities committed by the LRA will protect innocent children and stabilize a region of Africa that is critical to U.S. national security interests and international stability.

[As the author of the *Child Soldiers Prevention Act*](#), which was signed into law in 2008, I am especially concerned that many of these abducted children have been forced into becoming child soldiers. Kony has also most perniciously targeted little girls, making them victims of grotesque sexual slavery and violence. What he has done to children across central Africa is horrendous. The horror he has wrought has not been exaggerated.

The Ugandan military had done an effective job of driving the LRA out and reducing its numbers, but attacks have spread across the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Central African Republic. Children are still being taken. [I am hopeful](#) that the United States' technical assistance mission to the region, which was approved by the House and Senate, will successfully bring Joseph Kony and his commanders to justice. A small detail, under orders to not engage in combat, is providing intelligence support for regional governments at three forward operating bases in northern Uganda, South Sudan, and Central African Republic, where

Kony and several of his top commanders are believed to be hiding.

Another factor causing such violence in the region is the lack of coordinated strategy. I have also been vocal in Congress that our efforts in this region should no longer be discordant piecemeal approaches. I believed the re-appointment of a Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region of Africa would better coordinate our diplomatic efforts, and recently, the Administration filled this role. It is my hope that this Special Envoy will aid in such delicate issues as peace and reconciliation, recovery and rehabilitation, and robust application of the rule of law as the region prepares for a post-Kony era.

I recently had the humbling honor of meeting with a very courageous young woman named Evelyn Apoko, who survived the brutality of one of the LRA's most senior and vicious commanders. [Evelyn thanked the many Nebraskans](#) who have been passionately committed to seeing an end to the LRA's heinous victimization of children.

In our tough economic times, it is sometimes difficult to think through anything but job creation and federal spending imbalances. But as Americans, it is difficult for us to stand by and watch innocent children die. The end of the Kony era will help bring stability to an area wracked by violence and increase our own security interests as well.

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